



Anwar welcoming Prabowo at KL International Airport's Kompleks Bunga Raya yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

Regional, global cooperation M'sia's focus as Asean chair

> We do not want to consolidate strength solely in our country and marginalise others, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has begun its Asean chairmanship this year by strengthening regional and international cooperation with visits by the leaders of neighbouring countries, namely Singapore, Indonesia and Japan, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the Asean chairmanship provides the nation an opportunity to enhance the Asean network to benefit both Malaysia and its regional partners.

"This is what we emphasised with the prime minister of Singapore. We do not want to focus on consolidating strength solely in Malaysia and marginalise others.

"Instead, we aim to find ways and methods to solve and discuss issues that complicate us, including Myanmar, because the main prerequisite for raising economic strength, peace and political stability includes clear policies and economic strategies that drive growth.

"This can be achieved through active private sector involvement and an efficient public sector," he said in his keynote address at the Malaysian Economic Forum yesterday.

Anwar said Malaysia and Singapore launched the Johor-Singapore Special

Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) during the visit by Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong last Monday.

He said JS-SEZ is expected to become a key economic driver for Johor, Singapore and the surrounding regions.

He added that the working visit by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto yesterday strengthens economic cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia.

"This includes collaboration in Indonesia's key sectors, and partnerships with Khazanah Nasional Berhad and major Malaysian companies, particularly in the digital sector."

Indonesia is one of Malaysia's key trading partners, ranking as the seventh-largest globally and the third-largest among Asean member states in 2023.

Total trade between the two nations reached RM111.21 billion last year. Between January and October 2024, bilateral trade was valued at RM95.50 billion compared with RM94.37 billion for the corresponding period in 2023.

He said Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's visit this week is to discuss investment opportunities, trade and energy transition initiatives, including plans to make Sarawak a

new energy hub in the Southeast Asian region.

Anwar said his meeting with former Thai prime minister Dr Thaksin Shinawatra near Langkawi last month enabled preparations for Malaysia's role as Asean chair.

He said his discussions with Thaksin included exploring avenues for cooperation with Thailand and the Indochinese region, particularly in emerging fields such as microchips, semiconductors and blockchain technology - areas Malaysia should prioritise for future growth.

Anwar said the Malaysian Economic Forum provided an opportunity to strategise ways to enhance Malaysia's economic strength, Bernama reported.

He highlighted the importance of exploring new industries while learning from existing success stories, such as Penang's semiconductor industry.

"Although the semiconductor industry in Penang has been established for a long time, we risk falling behind if we do not actively explore new areas. We must build comprehensive strengths to stay competitive."

Anwar also urged all parties to collaborate and focus on meaningful work, avoiding trivial issues that could undermine and weaken the country's progress.

"With fresh discourse, a willingness to embrace change and the humility to acknowledge our weaknesses, including in the government, we can drive meaningful progress for the benefit of all."